

# MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM

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*Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)  
(Formerly Bureau of Health)  
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**\*\*ADVISORY – Important Information\*\***

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**2010PHADV021**

**TO:** All Epidemiologists, HETL, All HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis Staff, Local Public Health Liaisons, All FQHCs, All Infection Control Practitioners, All Physician Practices, All Hospitals, MEMA Duty Officers, County EMA Directors, Local Health Officers, Public Health Required, Public Health Nursing, All EMS, All RRCs

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**SUBJECT:** Hepatitis A Cluster in Waldo County, Maine

**DATE:** Thursday, August 12, 2010

**TIME:** 8:25 AM

**PAGES:** 2

**PRIORITY:** Medium

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)  
(Formerly Bureau of Health)

**Hepatitis A Cluster in Waldo County, Maine: Recommendations for  
Clinicians on Diagnosis and Referring Contacts to Maine CDC  
August 12, 2010**

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) is investigating a third case of acute hepatitis A. All three are residents of Waldo County and at least one attended a number of social functions in different areas of Maine while infective which included attendees from across the state. We therefore believe other people may be at risk for contracting the illness and may be showing signs and symptoms of it in the coming days and weeks.

The following provides information on Hepatitis A in Maine, recognition and diagnosis of Hepatitis A, and on how to refer self identified contacts to the Maine CDC for follow-up to determine the need for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

**Hepatitis A in Maine:**

Hepatitis A is an uncommon disease in Maine. An average of 11 cases are identified in Maine each year. Hepatitis A can result in mild illness in children; many will be asymptomatic. In adults, hepatitis A infection can range in severity from mild to life threatening. Case fatality can reach 1.8% in adults over 50 years of age. Individuals are considered infectious during the latter half of the incubation period and for approximately 1 week after onset of jaundice. The virus is excreted in feces and is transmitted by the fecal-oral route. Good hand washing is key to limiting disease transmission.

**Recognition and Diagnosis:**

Area health care providers are encouraged to consider hepatitis A infection in persons with recent onset of symptoms, including, jaundice, fever, anorexia, fatigue, nausea, dark urine, clay colored stools, diarrhea, and abdominal discomfort. Diagnostic testing should include hepatitis A IgM antibody and liver enzymes (AST/ALT). Interpretation of a positive IgM test for HAV is difficult in a recently immunized individual. IgM positive results can occur from either natural infection or immunization. Confirmation of infection in recently immunized individuals is usually dependent on clinical signs and elevated liver enzymes. Report all cases of Hepatitis A to the Maine CDC Disease Reporting and Consultation Line: 1-800-821-5821.

**Refer Self-Identified Contacts to Maine CDC:**

Maine CDC is currently identifying and interviewing contacts of the most recent Hepatitis A case. Maine CDC will determine the need for PEP based on degree of contact and the timing of the exposure. Providers of affected patients requiring PEP will be notified. Other persons presenting to health care providers stating they are contacts of a case of hepatitis A should be referred to the Maine CDC for investigation at 1-800-821-5821. ***There is no need to draw serology on these individuals.*** PEP will be recommended for those close contacts within the recommended two-week window after exposure to an infectious case.

**For More Information:** Contact Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821. Information on hepatitis A is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5641a3.htm>